

**In the Specification:**

Please replace the Abstract with the following:

“A composite absorbent structure and method includes a first wicking layer in contact with a second absorbent retention layer. The composite absorbent structure provides liquid transport and retention. The composite absorbent structure has a first wicking layer in intimate contact with the second retention layer to achieve a Contact Intimacy Ratio. In one aspect, a bonding agent is used in the present invention in combination with the first wicking layer of wettable lamellae or foams and a second retention layer of a hydrogel-forming polymeric material to form a composite absorbent structure having a Contact Intimacy Ratio and providing the liquid transport and retention functions. Polyhydroxyalkanoate or poly(lactic) acid may be used to bond the first wicking layer and the second retention layer.”